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Salt

A-B Team

16 Feb 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: D/NFAC
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AD-S/NFAC
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NIO/SP

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Attached is the amended statement on the A Team-B-Team by Senator Wallop. Please see page 4.

The Committee also agreed to make changes in the press release on the Committee Summary to clarify that the estimate in question was a 1976 estimate and that the B-Team was a one-time experiment.

Angelo Codevilla, who wrote Wallop's statement, insists that there are places in the estimate that support his views as originally stated on page 4. While he was overruled and that portion was withdrawn from the press release, he is going to try to find some words to convey his meaning in the printed version which the Committee will put out several weeks from now. We will be given an opportunity to examine that text before it is printed.

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Attachment: a/s

SEPARATE VIEWS OF SENATOR MALCOLM WALLOP
ON A-B TEAM EPISODE

The drafters on the NIEs on Soviet strategic forces, and the members of Dr. Richard Pipes' B-Team came up with substantially different evaluations of the Soviet Union's intentions and future capabilities. The Committee -- especially the Subcommittee on Quality of Intelligence -- rightly found this difference of opinion interesting, and after gaining the views of Dr. Pipes and certain other members of his Team on the Committee's Report, asked the staff to re-check the "facts and issues" of the controversy. This remained an inquiry, however, into the quality of competing products. For although the re-checking has produced a Report on the A-B Team episode which is much improved from the original, it is still fundamentally flawed, because, in the words of the Report, it "makes no attempt to judge which group's estimates concerning the USSR are correct." Therefore the Report's "findings and recommendations for improving the quality of future NIEs on Soviet capabilities and objectives are primarily directed at procedural issues." But it is logically impossible to determine the quality of opposing arguments without reference to the substance of those arguments. After all, the quality of an estimate depends above all upon its accuracy. In order to make judgments concerning quality, never mind suggesting improvements, one must judge where the truth lies against which the estimate's accuracy is to be measured.

Of course, because there is controversy over the significance of the Soviets' buildup of strategic forces, any report that touches on the facts is likely to be fought over. But we cannot and should not try to avoid responsibility for

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substantive judgments in this area. The flow of events won't let us. Moreover, as is the case here, judgments on substance turned away at the front door often come in through the windows.

Although the Report finds some elements of value in the fact that the NIE's drafters had some competition, it still tries to denigrate the B-Team by giving the impression that the NIE team contains a wide variety of points of view, while its competitor was a narrow band of zealots with preconceived notions. It even implies that Dr. Pipes, head of Harvard's Russian Institute, wrote on Soviet intentions before looking at the data. In fact Dr. Pipes did no such thing. The Report focuses on the leakage of information about the B-Team's report. Although it states that the leakers were "persons unknown" it leads the reader to ask cui bono? and gives the impression the B-Team benefited. This is pure innuendo.

But above all, this sort of thing distracts from the main point: the B-Team was constituted because for ten years in a row the NIEs had been giving a picture of Soviet strategic programs which appeared out of touch with reality. (I am not referring to relatively short range projections of numbers of launchers, which are easier to estimate.)

While the Soviets were beginning the biggest military buildup in history, the NIEs judged that they would not try to build as many missiles as we had. When the Soviets approached our number, the NIEs said they were unlikely to exceed it substantially; when they exceeded it substantially the NIEs said they would not try for decisive superiority -- the capability to fight and win a nuclear war. Only very recently have the NIEs admitted that possibility as an "elusive question." Now the NIEs say the Soviets may be

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trying for such a capability but they cannot be sure it will work. While there were divisive views in the intelligence agencies responsible for the NIEs, the views which dissented from the abovementioned line were confined to little footnotes. Only recently, under the pressure of events, have dissenters gained the privilege of setting out contrasting views in parallel text. Thus while it would be inaccurate to cast the agencies in the role of doves, it is quite accurate to characterize the NIEs' thrust and tone as very dove-ish indeed! The President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board was therefore quite right to ask whether the data on Soviet strategic programs would support more somber views.

The Report's main charge against the B-Team on Soviet Objectives is that it "reflected the views of only one segment of the spectrum" and that consequently "the outcome of the exercise was predetermined and the experiment's contribution lessened." One might ask whether the Report is to be read to imply that what it calls the "prestigious and articulate B-team authorities" wrote predetermined, that is to say academically dishonest analyses. The B-Team's critique was indeed pointed. It had a definite thrust. But, it seems to me, the direction of that thrust was called for by the relationship between the NIEs' past analyses and the reality of the Soviet buildup.

The fundamental argument, of course, is over the Soviet Union's intentions. Soviet professional literature has not deviated from the pattern set in Sokolovskii's book Soviet Military Strategy that nuclear weapons do not change the fundamental nature of warfare. Nuclear wars, like all others, have winners and losers. The Soviet military's task is, above all, to win wars. The Soviets have considered the doctrine of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), on which our

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military posture is based, but they have always rejected it. [As the Report states, the NIEs in question do not deal adequately with the Soviet leadership's mind-set on nuclear war. But the problem is not brevity, but rather, that while consciously refusing to entertain the Soviets' own conception of what they are about militarily, the authors of the NIEs have ended up conceiving of the Soviet's enterprise in terms of our own doctrine of MAD. The B-Team's position is that the Soviet Union is building its forces with a view to fighting, surviving, and winning a war. That position could be attacked simply by adducing evidence that the Soviet Union accepts MAD as a permanent condition. But the B-Team's detractors have not come up with any.]

We need more confrontation of opposing points of view on the basis of evidence. It is well known that experts, especially in bureaucratic settings, acquire interests in positions painstakingly built and long defended. The last thing we need are mechanisms for reaching more consensus on intelligence estimates, least of all should any such mechanisms be placed under so politicized a body as the National Security Council. Rather we need separate, competitive, teams of analysts, each making the best possible case for what the evidence at hand seems to indicate. Of course it is more comfortable for a policymaker to receive a single estimate on any given subject, especially if that estimate tells him what he wants to hear. But, while competitive analysis is not likely to make either policymakers or the intelligence community happy, it is likely to make all concerned more responsible.